

Subcommittee Chair Joe Neguse
Opening Statement
NPFPL Legislative Hearing
May 27, 2021

- Thank you all for attending this Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands' legislative hearing on four National Park Service bills.
- I would like to start by thanking the sponsoring Members of Congress as well as our witnesses for joining us today to speak about the personal and national significance of these proposals.
- This month is Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month – a time we celebrate and share the history and achievements of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders across our country.
- These communities make our nation more vibrant through their diversity of cultures, languages, and religions, and have both shaped the history of the United States and had their lives uprooted by moments in its history.
- Today, we will consider a bill from Representative Doris Matsui that would preserve and educate Americans about the imprisonment of Japanese Americans during World War II.
- In 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt issued an executive order that forcibly relocated and imprisoned more than 120,000 Japanese Americans in remote military-style prisons – stripping them of their homes, possessions, and freedom solely based on race.
- Although this racially based imprisonment occurred less than 80 years ago, many are unaware of this painful history.
- By permanently reauthorizing the National Park Service's Japanese American Confinement Site program, H.R. 1931 would ensure that current and future generations learn from this dark chapter in our country's history.

- H.R. 1931 would also provide competitive grants for the promotion of Japanese American confinement education as a means to understand the importance of our democratic principles, the use and abuse of power, and to elevate the importance of tolerance toward all Americans.
- I would like to thank Representative Matsui for her leadership and for her efforts to ensure that our public lands tell a more complete and inclusive American story.
- We will also consider three additional pieces of legislation today that commemorate places, people, and events in our nation's history.
- H.R. 1664, introduced by Representative Mark Veasey, would authorize the National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation to establish a monument in the District of Columbia honoring the extraordinary acts of valor, selfless service, and sacrifice displayed by Medal of Honor recipients.
- The Medal of Honor is our nation's highest military decoration – awarded only to those whose service and sacrifices far exceed the call of duty.
- Since its creation during the Civil War, the Medal of Honor has been awarded to more than 3,500 members of the armed forces.
- This bill would honor the unparalleled bravery of Medal of Honor recipients and serve as a lasting reminder of the values of courage, sacrifice, patriotism, citizenship, integrity, and commitment.
- Then, we will hear from Representative Gerald Connolly on his proposal to designate the September 11th National Memorial Trail Route.
- This trail would form a 1,300-mile system of trails and roadways linking the three sites of the September 11th attacks – the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon in Virginia, and the Flight 93 Memorial near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

- This trail would honor the heroes of September 11th and pay tribute to the family members and loved ones who were victims of the attack.
- Finally, we will consider a proposal from Resident Commissioner Jenniffer González-Colón to establish the Fort San Gerónimo del Boquerón in Puerto Rico as an affiliated area of the National Park System.
- This fort withstood a siege by the British Military in 1797 – successfully defending the people of Puerto Rico – and is the sole surviving fortification on the Island representing the 1797 Battle of San Juan.
- The focus on these sites and programs show that we still have a long way to go to ensure that the National Park System represents the full American story.
- By working to conserve and share the full diversity of the American experience, our national parks will allow current and future generations to learn from our nation’s history and enjoy a country that is more inclusive and equitable towards all people.
- I would like to thank the sponsoring Members and witnesses again for being here today. I look forward to hearing your testimonies.